

Message Text

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73

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 DRC-01 /116 W
----- 109397

R 181705Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0764

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 2601

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EC

SUBJECT: RUMORED RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT RODRIQUEZ PROVOKES
STRONG GOE REACTION

1. SUMMARY: QUITO WAS BRIEFLY RIFE WITH RUMORS THAT PRESIDENT RODRIQUEZ HAD RESIGNED, OR BEEN FORCED OUT OF OFFICE. THE SAME RUMORS WERE BROADCAST BY A GUAYAQUIL TV STATION, PROVOKING OFFICIAL GOE DENIALS CARRIED BY ALL MEDIA. THE OFFENDING TV STATION HAS BEEN CLOSED, PRESUMABLY TEMPORARILY, FOR SPREADING MALICIOUS FALSE INFORMATION. ALTHOUGH THE POSITION OF RODRIQUEZ SEEMS SECURE, THE INCIDENT PROBABLY REFLECTS SOME BEHIND-THE-SCENES MANEUVERING. END SUMMARY.

2. QUITO WAS RIFE WITH RUMORS APRIL 15-16 TO THE EFFECT THAT GENERAL RODRIQUEZ LARA HAD BEEN FORCED FROM THE PRESIDENCY. ACCORDING TO THE MORE LURID ACCOUNTS, THE INCIDENT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE AT AN APRIL 15 LATE-AFTERNOON CABINET MEETING, SAID TO HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY SOTRMY. THE PRESIDENT, ACCORDING TO THIS VERSION, WAS PRESENTED WITH AN ULTIMATUM BY SENIOR SERVICE CHIEFS WHO, IN SOME VARIANTS, WERE PREPARED TO INSTALL A SENIOR NAVY PERSONALITY (UNSPECIFIED) IN HIS PLACE.

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3. THE RUMORS, IN A SOMEWHAT Milder VERSION, WERE PICKED

UP BY GUAYAQUIL'S TV-2 AND, IDENTIFIED AS RUMORS, REPEATED OVER ITS MID-DAY NEWS BROADCAST ON APRIL 16. TV-2'S VERSION HAD IT THAT THE PRESIDENT, PHYSICALLY EXHAUSTED BY HIS TWO-YEARS-PLUS OF UNSTINTING SERVICE TO THE NATIONALIST REVOLUTION, HAD ASKED HIS MILITARY COLLEAGUES TO BE RELIEVED OF THE PRESIDENCY.

4. THE OFFICIAL REACTION WAS IMMEDIATE AND ENERGETIC. DESPITE THE FACT THAT, ONLY 15 MINUTES AFTER ITS NEWS FLASH, TV-2 BROADCAST A RETRACTION (BASED ON A GOE DENIAL) THE STATION WAS OFFICIALLY PUT OFF THE AIR. IT REMAINS BLACKED OUT AS OF THIS WRITING, FOR HAVING TRANSMITTED FALSE AND "UNSETTLING" REPORTS. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY FURTHER OFFICIAL DENIALS, WIDELY REPORTED ON APRIL 17 BY ALL MEDIA. SPEAKING THROUGH SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ADMINISTRATION COL. CARLOS AGUIRRE, THE PRESIDENT'S CHIEF AIDE AND TOP-LEVEL SPOKESMAN, THE GOE MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS: THAT NO NAVY-LED DEPUTATION TO DEMAND THE PRESIDENT'S RETIREMENT HAD EXISTED; THAT RODRIQUEZ WAS SELECTED BY THE THREE ARMED FORCES BRANCHES "FOR THE DURATION"; THAT THERE WAS NO COMMITMENT TO ROTATE THE PRESIDENCY AMONG THE THREE SERVICES; AND, IN RESPONSE TO A NEWSMAN'S QUESTION, THAT THERE WAS NO ARREST ORDER AGAINST EX-INTERIOR MINISTER GENERAL GALO LATORRE, PRESENTLY IN WASHINGTON AS ECUADOREAN REPRESENTATIVE BEFORE THE IADB. AGUIRRE CONCLUDED THAT THE WHOLE INCIDENT WAS "ABSURD" AND MERELY DESIGNED TO CAUSE UPSET AND CREATE PROBLEMS FOR THE GOE.

5. TO DRIVE HOME THE POINT OF SECURITY IN HIS POSITION AND SOLIDARITY WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES, PRESIDENT RODRIQUEZ HELD A MEETING WITH HIS DEFENSE MINISTER AND SERVICE CHIEFS ON APRIL 17 FOLLOWING WHICH PRESIDENTIAL PALACE ISSUED A STATEMENT THAT RODRIQUEZ HAD FULL SUPPORT OF ARMED FORCES.

6. COMMENT: WE TEND TO AGREE WITH COL. AGUIRRE'S ANALYSIS. PRESIDENT RODRIQUEZ APPEARS AS SECURE AS EVER IN HIS POSITION AND, DURING THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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BEEN PARTICULARLY ACTIVE IN VISITING VARIOUS DROUGHT-STRICKEN AREAS. THERE IS, LIKEWISE, EVIDENCE THAT THE APRIL 15 CABINET MEETING WAS THOROUGHLY ROUTINE AND, IN ANY CASE, IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT INTRA-MURAL MILITARY DISPUTES WOULD BE AIRED AT A MEETING ALSO ATTENDED BY CIVILIANS. THE REFERENCE TO GENERAL LATORRE REFLECTS THE FACT THAT, WHENEVER ANY PLOTTING IS RUMORED, HIS NAME RECEIVES PROMINENT MENTION. HE IS AN AGGRESSIVE

INDIVIDUAL, KNOWN TO BE AMBITIOUS AND CHAFING FOR A RETURN
FROM HIS GILDED EXILE. HE OR HIS SUPPORTERS MAY INDEED
HAVE INSPIRED THE RUMORS, JUST TO STIR UP THE POT.
GENERAL RODRIQUEZ, HOWEVER, HAS CONSISTENTLY MANAGED
TO OUTMANEUVER THE IMPULSIVE LATORRE AND HE IS NOT
REGARDED AS A SERIOUS THREAT. THE MOST SERIOUS DAMAGE
TO THE GOE FROM THIS INCIDENT MAY PROVE TO COME FROM
ITS OWN INSENSITIVE AND HEAVY-HANDED TREATMENT
OF THE MEDIA WHICH - CERTAINLY BY LOCAL STANDARDS - HAS
CONSISTENTLY BEEN DISCREET, DEFERENTIAL AND
SYMPATHETIC TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. BREWSTER

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